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ABSTRACT

Mikhail Gorbachev has drastically altered the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, and in so doing has also brought about a new international political reality for all of Europe. This paper contrasts Gorbachev's "New Thinking" in foreign policy with the Brezhnev Doctrine (an approach associated with former USSR leader Leonid Brezhnev that characterized Soviet policy prior to Gorbachev) in terms of the effect the policies have had on conditions in central Europe. Under the Brezhnev Doctrine, the countries of central Europe retained nominal sovereignty, but in reality were ideologically submerged by way of Communist Parties in each state that were mere carbon copies of the party in Moscow. Gorbachev released the countries from this ideological yoke, and thus they have been freed to formulate foreign policies that reflect their own interests. While there is now more freedom throughout central Europe, there is also greater instability. This raises the paradoxical question of whether Europe was better off in times of the Brezhnev Doctrine than it is now. (DB)

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FROM BREZHNEV DOCTRINE TO NEW THINKING: SOVIET REFORMS AND EUROPEAN SECURITY

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FROM BREZHNEV DOCTRINE TO NEW THINKING

A new international political reality is emerging in Europe, reality which is the direct consequence of Mikhail Gorbachev's New Thinking in foreign policy of the Soviet Union. The New Thinking has re-defined the concept of Soviet Union's national security, decoupled it from the ideological and regime uniformity of eastern and central Europe, and put on the European agenda the issue of unification of Germany.

These three developments have altered and seriously weakened NATO and the Warsaw Pact which, until now, have commanded considerable amount of loyalty and, in the latter's case, discipline over their respective member states. The dialogue of bipolarity has been replaced by a gaggle of multipolarity.

Many European countries, not heard from independently in decades, have regained their own voices and re-entered the European political arena; ideological blocs are being replaced with interest-based alignments, foreign policies of European states are beginning to reflect their own, concrete national rather than the more abstract supra-national interests.

These momentous changes in Europe are the direct consequence of Mikhail Gorbachev's radical alteration of Soviet Union's foreign and security policies in relation to eastern and central (subsequently referred to as central) Europe and the West in general. This paper attempts to contrast political conditions in central Europe under the Breshnev Doctrine and the New Thinking regimes. Specifically, an

effort is made here to examine Soviet security concepts implicit in the Brezhnev Doctrine and the New Thinking and contrast their respective implications for security and behavior of central European states.

Stalin's famous dictum that "this war is not as in the past; whoever occupies a territory also imposes his own social system,"[1] uttered in the early stages of World War II, accurately described European political reality for nearly half a century thereafter. Soon after the war ended, Stalinist system was extended as far west as the Soviet troops had reached, the middle of Germany and of Europe.

Stalin's attitude, not seriously challenged by either Churchill or Roosevelt, fundamentally determined the shape of post World War II security arrangements in Europe. The essence of this security system, generally referred to as the Yalta system, was the acceptance by the United States, the United Kingdom, and, naturally, the Soviet Union of the division of Europe into Soviet and Western spheres of influence. It was in the nature of Stalinism that the incorporation of central Europe into the Soviet sphere of influence also meant that all these countries were required to adopt the Soviet communist system of government and, in consequence, become politically, economically, and socially homogeneous.

The required internal structural homogeneity, which presupposed that significant change in one country inevitably bore relevance and, therefore, systemic implications to all the rest, in effect subordinated all internal polices of these countries to Soviet control. In practice this also meant that both internal development of central

European states as well as their foreign policies became nearly identical with those of the Soviet Union.

The Stalinist concept of Soviet Union's security thus came to include both domestic and international domains. Presence of "friendly" countries in central Europe came to mean that internally they become carbon copies of the Soviet Stalinist system and externally completely subservient to Moscow's policies.

State security so conceived of necessity had to regard the world in bi-polar terms and regard eastern and central Europe both as a cordon sanitaire against ideological influence of the West and a strategic beachhead in the center of the Western dominated Europe. This position on the part of the politically and militarily dominant Soviet Union effectively submerged all expressions of independent interests and policies by the central European countries.

The Brezhnev Doctrine was essentially an emanation from Stalinism, although with greater emphasis on inter-party relations than a direct state control. Thanks to Khrushchev's commitment to "the principles of complete equality, of respect for territorial integrity, state independence and sovereignty, and of noninterference in one another's internal affairs",[2] the Soviet leadership could speak of sovereignty and independence of all socialist states while at the same time assert that the policies pursued by the ruling Communist Parties "must damage neither socialism in their own country, nor the fundamental interests of the other socialist countries... This means that every Communist party is responsible not only to its own people but also the all the socialist countries and to the entire Communist movement."[3] This was the essence of the

doctrine of "limited sovereignty," otherwise known as the Brezhnev Doctrine.

Thus, while Khrushchev enjoys in the West the reputation of the first reformer in USSR's history, his policies toward central European states preserved essentially Stalinist system of controls. This was clearly evident in the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 to keep that country within the Warsaw Pact, the enunciation by Suslov of the universal laws of socialist development, with "the establishment of the political rule of the working class with its vanguard in the leadership position"[4] being law number one, and the shifting of Moscow's mechanisms of control over the satellites from state to party channels or direct institutional (secret police, armed forces) connections.[5] During Brezhnev's neo-Stalinist rule, which followed Khrushchev's ouster in 1964, the inter-party controls were further strengthened by Moscow's insistence on the observance by the ruling communist parties in central Europe of the principles of socialist internationalism, embodied in the Brezhnev Doctrine, democratic centralism, and, again restated, the leading role of the communist party.[6]

During all these years, it should be recalled, there was ample evidence coming from central European states that neither the domestic policies nor foreign orientation imposed upon them by the eastern hegemonic power corresponded to their domestic needs or external interests. The Berlin riots of 1953, the Polish and Hungarian upheavals of 1956, the Czech Spring of 1968, the Polish upheavals of 1970, 1976, and the emergence of Solidarity in 1980-81 amply demonstrated that the alien systemic mould imposed upon these nations

after World War II was in fundamental conflict with their cultural, political and economics values.

From mid 1940's, therefore, until the end of the Brezhnev Doctrine era in the latter 1980's, the international political configuration as well as the security of Europe were shaped by the essentially Stalinist domestic and external policies pursued by the Soviet leaders. Both had profound implications for the structure and substance of European politics.

The mind set and the system which produced the Brezhnev Doctrine is rightfully accused of causing stagnation at home and unnecessary confrontation in external relations. Policies which it pursued at home and in the countries of the bloc aimed at the static objectives of assuring security of communist parties' power, preserving internal stability, and building up Soviet strategic, naval and air forces. The military expansion program permitted the Soviet Union to achieve strategic party with the United States and extend Moscow's global reach sufficiently to engage in risky adventures in Africa and Afghanistan. Thus, while the Soviet Union pursued status quo oriented policies at home and energetic, some would call them adventuristic, military and political policies abroad, the weakening of Soviet economic and technological base required quite the reverse: developmental program at home and a conservative policy abroad.

The third major element of Brezhnev's foreign policy, which was complementary with his doctrine of limited sovereignty applied to central European states, was his major drive to secure Western approval of the status quo in Europe, i.e., Soviet dominance in central Europe and the division of Germany. If successful, the Brezhnev

vision of a future Europe, despite the occasional talk about a comprehensive European security system replacing NATO and WTO, would have perpetuated the two bloc system and with it all the consequences for a freer political, economic and cultural self-expression of the nations in central Europe.

Enforcement of the Brezhnev Doctrine continued the division of Europe and sustained the facade of unity in the east. Internally, the Soviet bloc's security rested on the requirement of bloc-wide regime uniformity, suppression of the naturally present differences among the central European states in their domestic policies and foreign orientations, and the preservation of the artificially created unity of the bloc. The invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 brought home to all Europeans, east and west, that domestically initiated reforms of the communist systems, even if successful, would not be permitted to survive against the Soviet leaders' wishes.

The 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia not only suppressed the Czech reforms but also raised the basic issue of reformability of communist systems. The Brezhnev Doctrine delcared in September formally banned any significant systemic deviation of the satellites from the Soviet approved model. This additional consequence of the invasion was the final, and what appeared to be effective, removal from the European scene of central European states as independent actors. From this point on, the road to Budapest, Prague, or Warsaw seemed to lead through Moscow.

The logic of the Stalinist view of Soviet Union's security, as defined by Brezhnev's concept of "equal security" and expressed in relation to central Europe by the Brezhnev Doctrine, was that the

Soviet Union "had" to control central Europe. This control, given ideological demands of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism, had to encompass these countries' domestic systems as well as foreign policies. This, in turn, resulted in the creation in the center of Europe of a vacuum of authentic, freely arrived at and independently expressed foreign policy interests by the countries located in the region.

In the end, Brezhnev's European security objectives, which boiled down to gaining Western acceptance of the European status quo, were undermined by his regime's domestic conservatism and the consequent continued economic and technological stagnation. Soviet decline was helped along by the frequently explosive turbulence in the satellite states and the economic burden of arms race with the United States.

Gorbachev's fundamental policy changes and their far-reaching consequences were brought about, as their author himself has stated on a number of occasions, by the inability of the Stalinist "ossified system of power" and "its command-pressure mechanism"[7] to keep up, much less successfully compete, with the economic and technological progress, with its military implications, being achieved by the industrial democracies. Consequently, new thinking in foreign policy, along with glasnost, perestroika, and demokratizatsia, was made necessary by the unavoidable need to revitalize Soviet economic productivity and technological innovation on a national scale.

On the most general level, Gorbachev created, for the first time since the heady days of Khrushchev, an atmosphere of questioning, a sense of movement, and a definite predisposition toward alteration of the status quo. Glasnost exposed many areas of Soviet political, economic, social, and cultural life where arbitrary decision-making

by unaccountable bureaucrats in party and state organs had stultified all dynamism and originality in the Soviet society. He denounced the Stalinist-Brezhnevist social legacy which generated "indifference, a slackening in the social activeness of the masses, [and] the alienation of the working people from public ownership and management."[8] At the same time Gorbachev called for a fundamental restructuring which would involve "economic reform, development of the social and cultural sphere, and instilling in people a proprietary interest toward everything that is taking place in the country."[9] His reference to the "proprietary interest" and, in the same speech, the significance of the "human factor", without which" politics becomes an unpredictable improvisation that is risky both for one's own country and for others", was, until that point, unprecedented in Soviet communist ideology. It constituted an acknowledgment of the significance of human psychology and individual person's motivating mechanisms apart from all external ideological and institutional considerations.

An important counter-point to his emphasis of the individual human factor on the domestic level was Gorbachev's elevation to the highest level of international significance of the universal human concerns, such as the survival of the human species and avoidance of the nuclear war, conservation of the planet's natural resources, the ecological danger, the social problems of the Third World, global economic interdependence, and the all-encompassing scientific, technological, and communications revolution. The ideological propositions, such as the significance of the human element and the universal human concerns, which are shared by civilized people everywhere,

seem to have assumed a preeminent place in Gorbachev's thinking, superseding class-oriented views which led to the division of the world during th previous seventy years. His economic, political, and ideological restructuring of the Soviet Union unavoidably found their reflections in his policies toward the countries of central Europe.

Even mild Soviet reforms, such as under Khrushchev, have always found resounding echoes in Central Europe, as in Poland and Hungary in 1956. Undoubtedly mindful of Khrushchev's failure to anticipate the impact of his domestic changes on the satellite countries, Gorbachev's handling of central European states seems to have been a function of perestroika: the more radical were his reforms at home the less restrictive were his policies toward innovation and autonomy in central European states.

Gorbachev's initial pronouncements soon after taking power in the spring of 1985 clearly conveyed the traditional line of insistence on political orthodoxy, protection of "common" socialist interests, and tight control of dissidents at home. Changes in his domestic policies and shortly after in his attitude toward the satellite countries began to emerge in the spring of 1987. In April, speaking in Prague, he stated that "No one has the right to claim a special status in the socialist world" but then followed this statement up by reminding that every socialist country is obliged to care "not only for its own interests but also for common interests."[10] The same month he signed an agreement with General Jaruzelski which committed both countries, among others, to fill in all the "white spots" in the history of Polish-Soviet relations. Given the explosive nature of some of the

historical events to be examined, this certainly was a new departure in Soviet-Polish relations.

In the fall of 1987, the pace of change in the Soviet leader's attitude toward central Europe quickened. In his speech commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the October Revolution, Gorbachev strongly affirmed "unconditional and complete equality of states," predominance of the ruling communist parties but at the same time their responsibility for the affairs in their respective states, and, on the international level, "concern for the common cause of socialism."[11]

He considerably loosened the rules for domestic innovation in the satellite states. Socialist unity, which he said was still needed, "does not at all mean identity and uniformity" and "socialism does not and cannot have any 'model' that everyone must measure up to." "Socialist diversity," he concluded, "is good and useful."[12]

One of the most significant indicators of increasing autonomy of East European states has been Soviet attitude toward inter-party relations. In the 1955 and 1956, the Soviet-Yugoslav declarations on equality and independence was extended to both inter-state and inter-party relations. On the other hand, in the November 1956 communique issued at the end of Polish-Soviet negotiations in Moscow, Khrushchev successfully resisted Gomulka's demand to publicly accept a similar relationship between Polish and Soviet parties and states. Since Khrushchev's times, party channels have been Kremlin's principal conduits of communication with and control of the satellite parties and states.[13]

This unequal relationship between the CPSU and central European parties, which has been a constant in Soviet-satellite relations since World War II, appears to have been seriously weakened by Vadim Medvedev, CPSU Central Committee Secretary in charge of relations with central European states and a close associate of Gorbachev. While accompanying Gorbachev on his visit to Poland in July 1988, Medvedev declared that "the principle of sovereignty in inter-state relations and the party in inter-party relations is of an unconditional nature. The principle of independence in relations between socialist countries is analogous to the principle of relations between states with different systems."[14] Compared to the past pronouncements on the subject, the apparently authoritative declaration that the principle of sovereignty applies to inter-state and inter-party relations and that socialist independence is "analogous" to independence of states with different systems bears out Zbigniew Brzezinski's assessment that the "Kremlin, publicly and privately, places less and less emphasis on the ideological unity and orthodoxy of the Soviet bloc...[and] is trying... to base mutual relations [with the Eastern European states] on common interests rather than hicrarchical subordination..."[15]

The key remaining question was whether the doctrine of limited sovereignty, the Brezhnev Doctrine, was still in force. Dr. Oleg T. Bogomolov, Director of the Institute of Economics and the World Socialist System and specialist on Soviet-East European relations, stated at a meeting on East-West Relations and Eastern Europe that "The Brezhnev Doctrine is completely unacceptable and unthinkable. ...we gave too much advice before to our partners, and it was

actually very damaging to them. It's time to keep our advice to ourselves."[16]

The repudiation of the Brezhnev Doctrine came from Georgii Korniyenko, the first deputy chief of CPSU International Department, who said that "We have given up the Brezhnev principle of limited sovereignty... ,"[17] and Gorbachev himself, who declared in February 1989 that the Soviet Union "is restructuring relations with the socialist countries" so as to base them on "unconditional independence, full equality, strict noninterference in internal affairs, and rectification of the deformations and mistakes linked with the earlier period of the history of socialism."[18]

The abandonment of the Brezhnev Doctrine was closely related to, perhaps a product of, a redefinition of the basis and the nature of USSR's national security at the end of the twentieth century. The Gorbachev leadership rejected Brezhnev's concept of equal security, which required that the Soviet Union's military forces, especially its strategic component, be equal to the combined strength of all its actual and likely enemies. This policy, apart from being threatening to all its kneighbors and adversaries alike, also implicitly imposed upon the country's economic, technological and manpower resources the onerous task of matching all the military advances taking place in the West and in China. This "'feedback' effect," wrote Professor Vyacheslav Dashichev in his now famous critical article, "put the Soviet Union in an extremely grave condition in the areas of foreign policy and the economy. The world's great powers... were ranged against it. Countering their many times superior potential was dangerously beyond the USSR's capability."[19]

This change in the concept of Soviet security was equivalent to the rejection by Gorbachev of security based on the static concept of territorial and regime control in favor of a security anchored in economic performance and political pluralism. A. Yakovlev had apparently precisely this in mind when he said that in the past neither the invention of the steam engine nor of electricity "enriched humanity as much as did colonial wars and the conquest of another's territory. Today, only scientific-technological progress can secure the well-being of peoples. This is my deep conviction. ...it turns out that scientific -- technological revolution does not require a repartition of the world by military means as it did in the past, and that such a repartition would not increase the wealth of humanity, but rather would give birth to poverty and suffering. This is a very important notion in that it helps us understand what is happening today to the concept of security and all its doctrines and interpretations."[20]

In line with the abandonment of the confrontational and very much particularistic (selfish) equal security concept, the Soviet Union declared its commitment to mutual security, which emphasizes universalistic values in the sphere of security. In this regard, Gorbachev's repeated definitions of his new foreign policy concept as including universal human, rather than class, concerns[21] and the numerous references to the "universal human interests" in his famous speech to the United Nations,[22] lay the groundwork for his contention that "further world progress is only possible through a search for universal human consensus as we move forward to a new world order."[23]

Mr. Gorbachev's closest advisers seem to have recognized the indivisibility of national security in the modern world Economic and technological interdependence as well as the reality of nuclear weapons have made it "obvious that security cannot be selfish. It is either for everybody or for nobody."[24] Yakovlev went even further and broadened the concept of security to include not only military and political matters but also "economic security of states... [and] problems like cultural security legal security and informational security."[25]

The point here is that Gorbachev's national security doctrine differs sharply from its Stalinist-Brezhnevist predecessor. The latter essentially viewed the USSR secure only if it dominated others, the former has declared that "the security of some cannot be ensured at the expense of the security of others."[26]

The shift from the Brezhnev Doctrine to New Thinking in Soviet foreign policy predictably has had a profound impact in three important spheres: in the Soviet national security policies, as suggested above, in USSR's relations with the countries of central Europe, and in the broader arena of European security. In all three spheres the changes which this shift has produced have been both substantial and disintegrative of the bi-polarity which had prevailed on the European continent since World War II.

From the perspective of Soviet-central European relations, the most important aspect of the transition from the Brezhnev Doctrine to New Thinking was a decoupling of the Soviet Union's security policies from regime uniformity within the Soviet bloc. The decoupling

signified the abandonment by the Soviet Union of the view that its security in Europe required direct Soviet military and political domination of central European states and the imposition upon the latter communist regimes identical to that of the Soviet Union.

This disengagement by the USSR from domestic politics of central European states made it possible for these countries to begin the process of implementing fundamental reforms so as to eliminate the chasms which existed between the communist regimes and the populations they governed. Poland and Hungary were thus able to embark on the relatively gradual, orderly and peaceful internal transformations during 1989, transformations which, at least so far, have insured domestic stability in spite, especially in the Polish case, of exceedingly difficult economic situation.

In the Czechoslovak, East German and Bulgarian cases, were the conservative and repressive regimes required Gorbachev's behind-the-scenes help and intense popular pressures before they collapsed. After initial turmoil, internal stability, in each country in a different way, is slowly being achieved. Only Rumania still seems to be in the throes of uncompleted revolution.

While there is no guarantee that all these countries will continue on a stable course, the Soviet Union has reduced both the level of its direct responsibility for what happens in those countries as well as the economic burdens of bailing out client regime racked by popular explosions. It should be pointed out that while the previous manifestations of popular dissatisfaction with the imposed communist rule (Poland, Hungary 1956; Czechoslovakia 1968, Poland 1970, 1976, 1980-81) have little reason to occur now, there are enough internal

economic and minority problems in the region to make any attempt at prediction of lasting tranquillity in the region a highly risky one.

Greater freedom for these countries also brought for each of them the responsibility for internal stability. If in the past frequent domestic explosions are produced by the policies of the dominant center (Moscow), in the future any instability in the region is likely to be caused by problems originating in the peripery, in the countries themselves. Consequently, the implementation of the New Thinking and the consequent decoupling of Soviet security from central European regime security permitted each individual state to emphasize national security and seek alliances based on national interest rather than the ideological-political interests of the alien communist regimes.

This de-ideologization of inter-state relations, to use Gorbachev's own words, between the USSR and central European states in turn permitted the formation of inter-state alliances in the eastern and central European region based on convergence of interests rather than ideological-political uniformity. In this sense, the attendance of the recent Warsaw Treaty Organization's Political Consultative Committee's meetings by Prime Minister T. Mazowiecki was a watershed event and an example of this new reality.

Non-ideological,interest based ailgnments are more stable and at the same time more flexible. Absence of ideological considerations permits diversity of views, practices and approaches without implying heresy or betrayal. Extensive de-ideologization of inter-state relations within the bloc and between blocs also sharply reduced, if not

completely eliminated, the antagomistic and confrontational nature of relations among all European states.

On the European level, therefore, the consequences which followed the introduction of New Thinking into Soviet foreign policy has led to a very sharp drop in Western popular perception of the Soviet Union as an implacable and inherently aggressive communist power. The new Soviet image which is emerging resembles more that of a troubled traditional power, too beset by serious domestic problems to have either the energy or the resources for foreign adventures.

Abandonment by the Soviet leadership of the Breshnev Doctrine has thus led to the entry onto the European political arena of several independent actors which, since World War II, have been held tightly within the Stalinist-Brezhnevist bloc. This "multi-polarization" of central European international politics is naturally also transforming the two alliances from two antagomistic and mutually threatening blocs into essentially order-keeping political arrangements.

The decoupling of Soviet security and regime uniformity in central Europe, the deideologization of relations among states of the region, and the consequent fundamental domestic reforms which have been introduced in most of these countries have also brought to the forefront of European concern the issue of unification of the two German states. While the discussion of the multifaceted security problem, which the unification of Germany has raised for its immediate neighbors, for all of Europe, and for the superpowers is not within the preview of this paper, it should be recognized here that one of the major consequences of the implementation of New Thinking has been the re-emergence of the problem of German power in Europe.

As a general security issue of concern to all CSCE states and as a concrete security problem for a number of her neighbors, united Germany's impact on European security and stability will hold international attention well into the next century.

* * * * *

New Thinking has changed international political security in Europe. The new Soviet foreign policy under President Gorbachev has sharply reduced the likelihood of a general war in Europe between the two alliance systems. However, in the process of decompressing the domestic and international politics in the center of Europe he has simultaneously increased the potential for an eruption of a number of smaller scale internal and even international conflicts.

Leaving aside the explosions caused by socioeconomic dissatisfaction, which even the pre-Gorbachev system failed. to prevent, a major source of instability in Europe are likely to be ethnic conflicts. The multinational states such as Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia may, and the last two already do, experience serious nationality conflicts. In the case of Rumania, clashes between Rumanians and the Hungarian minority could bring in Hungary into the strife and thus transform an internal into conflict an international one. The seriousness of nationality clashes in the Soviet Union is self-evident and does not need to be explained here.

Still unresolved territorial disputes in the new Europe also

could lead to serious conflicts on the continent. The latent territorial disputes between Hungary and Rumania over Transylvania and between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria over Macedonia could, under the stimulus of inter-ethnic clashes there, escalate into an international armed conflicts. The flare-;up between Poland and Chancellor Kohl over Poland's Oder-Neisse border guarantees, while not likely to lead to an armed conflict, has the potential for causing much uncertainty and even nstability in Europe. The chancellor's willful refusal to unequivocally guarantee Poland's western border raises serious questions about German future intentions, generates concern and uncertainly among Germany's neighbors, especially in Poland, and impedes orderly and confident transition from a bi-polar to a stable and peaceful "new European home."

The question may legitimately be asked whether, from the point of view of the preservation of peace, Europe was better off in times of Brezhnev Doctrine or is now, after the New Thinking revolution has run what appears at this time as a major part of its course. Undoubtedly, peoples of central Europe feel freer now, with greater opportunity to be and act themselves. However, whether this being and acting themselves will bring prosperity, stability and contentment only future will show.

Secondly, nations in Europe may feel much less threatened by a general nuclear or even conventional war. And yet, in the enphoric atmosphere which seems to prevail on both sides of the Atlantic, one sobering question remains to be answered: on a continent apparently still not at peace with itself, still either uncontrollably or wilfully driven by claims and counter-claims, is the free play of social

and political forces, loosened by the repudiation of the Brashnev Doctrine, necessarily safer than the controlled conditions of the era of bi-polarity? Are the new categories of "local" conflicts in Europe necessrily safer than the dnager of the "big" war of the past? Have the Europeans learned anything from World Wars I and II?

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